AKIRA 4™

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AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 4

KING OF CLOWNS

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

The year is 2030. The world is rebuilding from World War III. In **Neo-Tokyo**, plans are being made to hold the next Olympics in the "old city," where, thirty-eight years before, the first of the bombs fell.

Kaneda and his friends, teenage delinquents, make an unauthorized motorcycle run to check out the old site. They encounter a terrified child, known only as **Number 26**, possessing extraordinary telekinetic abilities. During the encounter, the paranormal boy gravely injures **Tetsuo**, one of Kaneda's close friends. Then, he vanishes.

Kaneda's gang find themselves in trouble following the incident. They learn that the "police" they met following the accident were actually part of some secret concern. Moreover, **Tetsuo**, who they believed had been taken to a hospital, has disappeared.

The next night, at **Harukiya**, a tough local dive, **Kaneda** attempts, unsuccessfully, to pick up a newcomer, **Kay**. In fact, she and her companion, **Ryu**, are part of an underground resistance group dedicated to learning what is happening in the old city and putting a stop to it.

Trouble ensues and both delinquents and resistance fighters again encounter **Number 26**. Again, he uses his powers to catastrophic effect. Both groups are scattered, but **Ryu** and **Kaneda** re-encounter **Number 26. Ryu** attempts to reassure the paranormal boy, but **Kaneda** is anxious to punish him for injuring **Tetsuo**. As they argue, the mysterious soldiers pursuing **Number 26** reach the scene. A firefight results.

Kaneda is separated from **Ryu** and **Number 26**, whom the soldiers are determined to recapture alive. **Kay** saves Kaneda's life, but **Ryu** and **Number 26** are cornered. The paranormal boy becomes increasingly ill, exhibiting symptoms of drug withdrawal. **Kaneda** returns the favor he owes the resistance fighters by stealing a truck and heading back to save **Ryu** and **Number 26**.

That is when the ominous **Colonel** in charge of the covert operation appears with a secret weapon—**Number 27**, a crippled paranormal child named **Masaru**.

Masaru astonishes the resistance fighters by addressing **Number 26** as **Takashi**. **Kay** and **Ryu** had assumed that **Number 26** was the Colonel's ultimate weapon—the as-yet unseen paranormal giant code-named **Akira**.

Kaneda provokes a crisis by pretending to threaten **Takashi**. He responds with telekinetic upheavals. **Kaneda** is again separated from the resistance fighters, but he manages to intercept and hide a pill meant for **Takashi**, who is recaptured by the Colonel's men.

The next day, **Tetsuo** reappears in school, seemingly all right. However, during Tetsuo's treatment, the **Colonel** has learned the delinquent shows great psychic potential and would be a valuable asset.

Kaneda has a girl friend in the school infirmary analyze the drug intended for **Takashi**. It is similar in substance to stuff **Kaneda** and his friends take, but unbelieveably concentrated and powerful.

Eager for action, **Kaneda**, **Tetsuo**, and their gang head out for a rumble with their chief rivals—the vicious **Clown** gang.

One of the **Clowns** corners **Tetsuo**. **Kaneda** and his group come to the rescue. **Tetsuo** astonishes them, first by displaying uncharacteristic bloodthirstiness, and then by challenging Kaneda's authority.

Determined not to let a potential human weapon escape him, the **Colonel** goes to the school the next day. Collecting **Tetsuo** there, he also encounters **Kaneda** and almost captures him.

Under treatments of the Colonel's chief medical officer, **Tetsuo** begins to exhibit powerful psychic abilities...and to undergo great pain.

Meanwhile, **Kaneda**, trying to spy on the **Colonel** and learn what is happening to **Tetsuo**, re-encounters the members of the resistance, and is brought back to their headquarters. He is questioned by **Ryu** about the stolen drug. When he denies knowledge of it, **Kaneda** is put under Kay's personal surveillance...to her immense dismay.

Kiyoko, another of the psychic children under the Colonel's control, warns her master that **Akira**—who is asleep and expected to remain so for some time—will awaken soon. The **Colonel** views this as disastrous. Meanwhile, at the resistance hideout, **Kaneda** encounters a ghost-like apparition of himself in flames, shouting a name...**Akira**.

The Colonel's spies learn where the resistance is centered, and soldiers enter the hideout in force, scattering the rebels. **Kaneda** and **Kay** escape together. They flee to **Harukiya**, where the bartender agrees to shelter them.

Overwhelmed by pain, and by the burgeoning powers within him, **Tetsuo** breaks out of the Colonel's installation, leaving death in his wake.

Finally, he is cornered alone in the street...by the **Clown** gang.

STOP IT!!
MY HEAD IS SPLITTING...
NAW... IT ISN'T SPLITTING YET ...
... BUT IT'S GONNA BE!!
SWOOSH
CHING

!
LOOK!
YAAGH!
THOG
H-HEY... WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU OKAY?
CAREFUL!!
MY EYES!!!
WATCH THAT KID... HE'S UP TO SOMETHING WEIRD!!
AAAHH
KREEK

GUH!
AUGH!

OH, GOD!!

GROSS...

Y'KNOW... MY HEAD DOESN'T HURT A BIT ANY MORE. HOW'S YOURS?

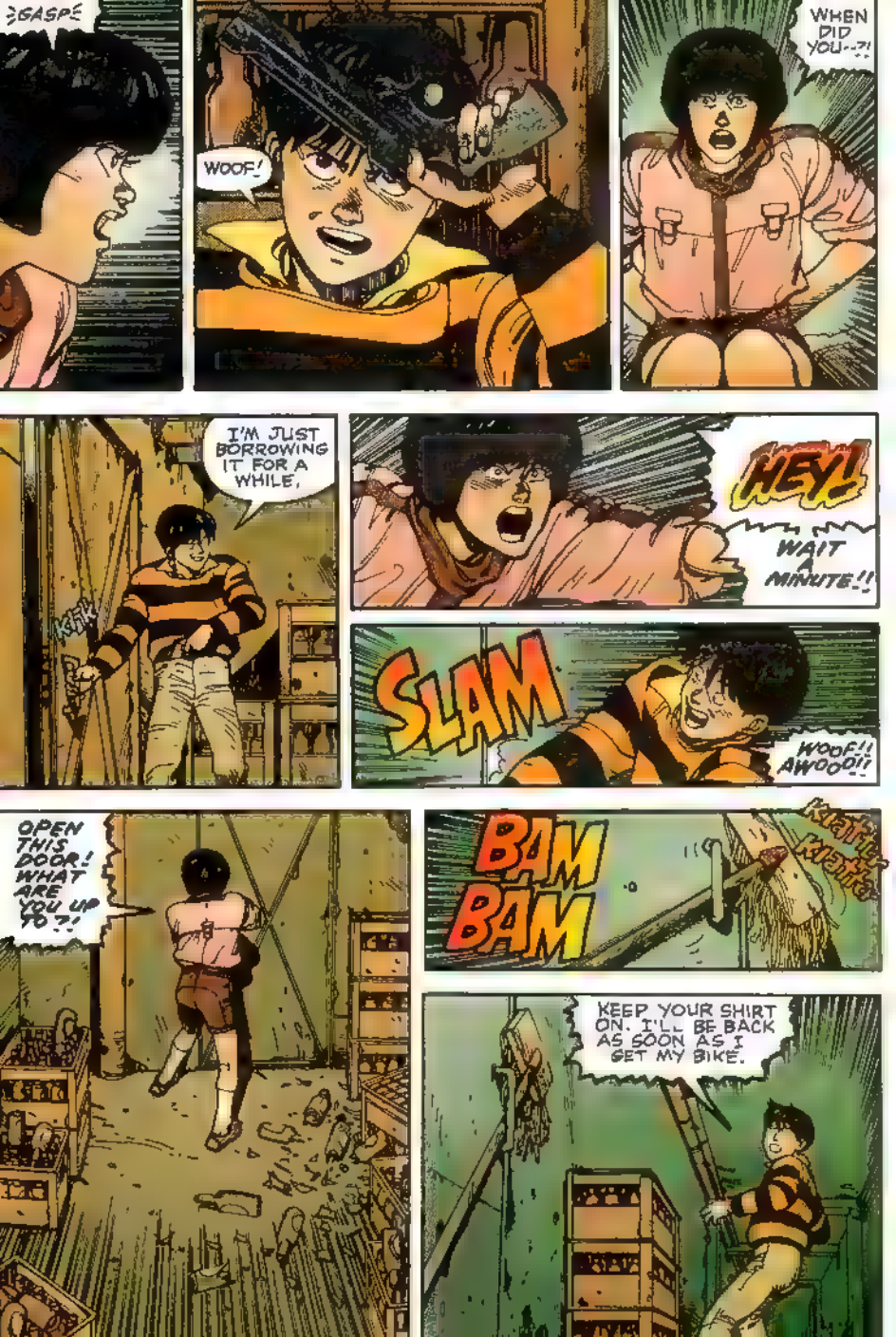
YIIIIEEEE!
HEY!
HUNH?
chatter chatter
YOU'VE GOT IT, DON'T YOU?
G-GOT WHAT?
THE DRUG... THE ONE I NEED... TO FEEL BETTER.
.....
:UH:
W-WE... DON'T HAVE IT ON US...
AH... AH... AH...
YOU GOT A PROBLEM?

GOD DAMN IT!
THE HEADACHE'S COMING BACK... STRONGER. LIKE I COULD DIE FROM IT!
?
DAMN!
WAIT--!
!
LET HIM GO, STUPID!
WE'LL GET YOU WHAT YOU NEED!
ARE YOU LOSING IT? SHUT UP!!
PUFF
PUFF

HARUKIMA
KEEP THIS DOOR LOCKED
I LOVE YOU
WOW
HAPPY NEW YEAR
...NOT ONE BIT. THIS ROOM IS A PIGSTY... A CLAMMY PIGSTY!
AND THAT SMELL...!
I SUPPOSE YOU WERE EXPECTING A SUITE AT THE PLAZA.
NO WATER, NO TOILET, THE CEILING SO LOW WE CAN HARDLY STAND UPRIGHT.
IT'S A RATHOLE!

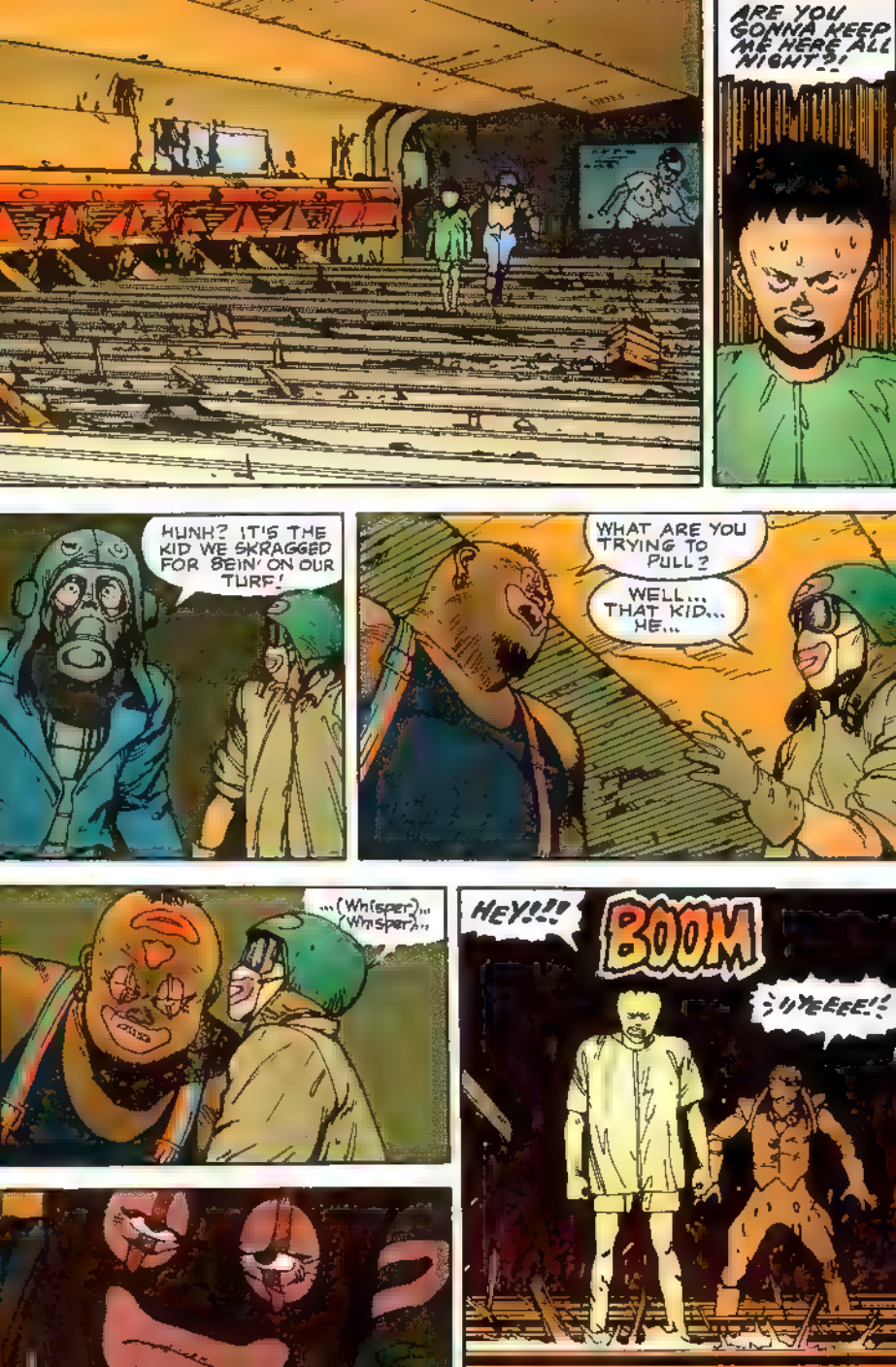
SO, WHAT'S THE STORY ON THAT RYU GUY, ANYWAY?
WHAT'S HE TO YOU?
HE'S MY BROTHER.
BUT HE DOESN'T LOOK ANYTHING LIKE YOU
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS
?
OH, BUT IT IS. IF ONLY YOU KNEW THE THINGS I'D IMAGINED.
MOVE THAT HAND OR LOSE IT.
YOU DON'T MEAN THAT.

EYAAAAN!
MMPH!!
AWOOOO!!
WOOF! WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!
YOU'RE TAKING THIS JOKE TOO FAR--
SMAK
--YOU MORON!!
NOW, GET OFF!!
CRASH
CLATTER
I WARNED YOU.


GASP!
WOOF!
WHEN DID YOU--?!
I'M JUST BORROWING IT FOR A WHILE.
KIK
HEY!
WAIT A MINUTE!!
SLAM
WOOF!! AWOO!!
OPEN THIS DOOR! WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?!
BAM BAM
KLAK-KLAK
KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON. I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I GET MY BIKE.

SKREEEE
HEY! WE'RE HERE!
I SAID..
SHUT UP! IT MAKES MY HEAD HURT WHEN YOU TALK.
WHAT'S JOKER GONNA SAY ABOUT IT?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
IS HE NUTS BRINGING THAT WEIRDO HERE?
CAREFUL, DON'T TRIP IN THE DARK.
ZIA BOWLING
LIFE'S A BITCH!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, CHIP'S HEAD EXPLODED?!
WHAT KINDA DRUGS YOU BEEN TAKING, BRO'?
SURE IT WASN'T HIS BALLS?
IT WAS HIS HEAD?
SO WHO KILLED HIM?
WELL...
WELL WHAT?!
DID YOU BRING THE KILLER HERE?!
WHERE IS HE?


ARE YOU GONNA KEEP ME HERE ALL NIGHT?!
HUNH? IT'S THE KID WE SKRAGGED FOR BEIN' ON OUR TURF!
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL?
WELL... THAT KID... HE...
...(Whisper)... (Whisper)...
HEY!!!
BOOM
YEEEE!!

WHAT WAS THAT?
OH, NO.
YOU PUNK!!
JOKER--!
THINK YOU'RE PRETTY TOUGH, HUNH?
WELL, I'M GONNA BREAK YOU IN TWO!
PLOOM
?!
PLOOM

YAAAHHHH!!
WUSH
KRAK
KRAK
NOW, WHERE ARE MY DRUGS ?

PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
IT'S GOTTA BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE!
RAT'S ANOTHER CROSSWAY!
I'M GOING UP TO THE STREET LEVEL AND LOOK FOR MY BIKE THERE. THAT'LL TAKE LESS TIME.
rattle rattle rattle rattle
WHOA!!
SNAP
THUD

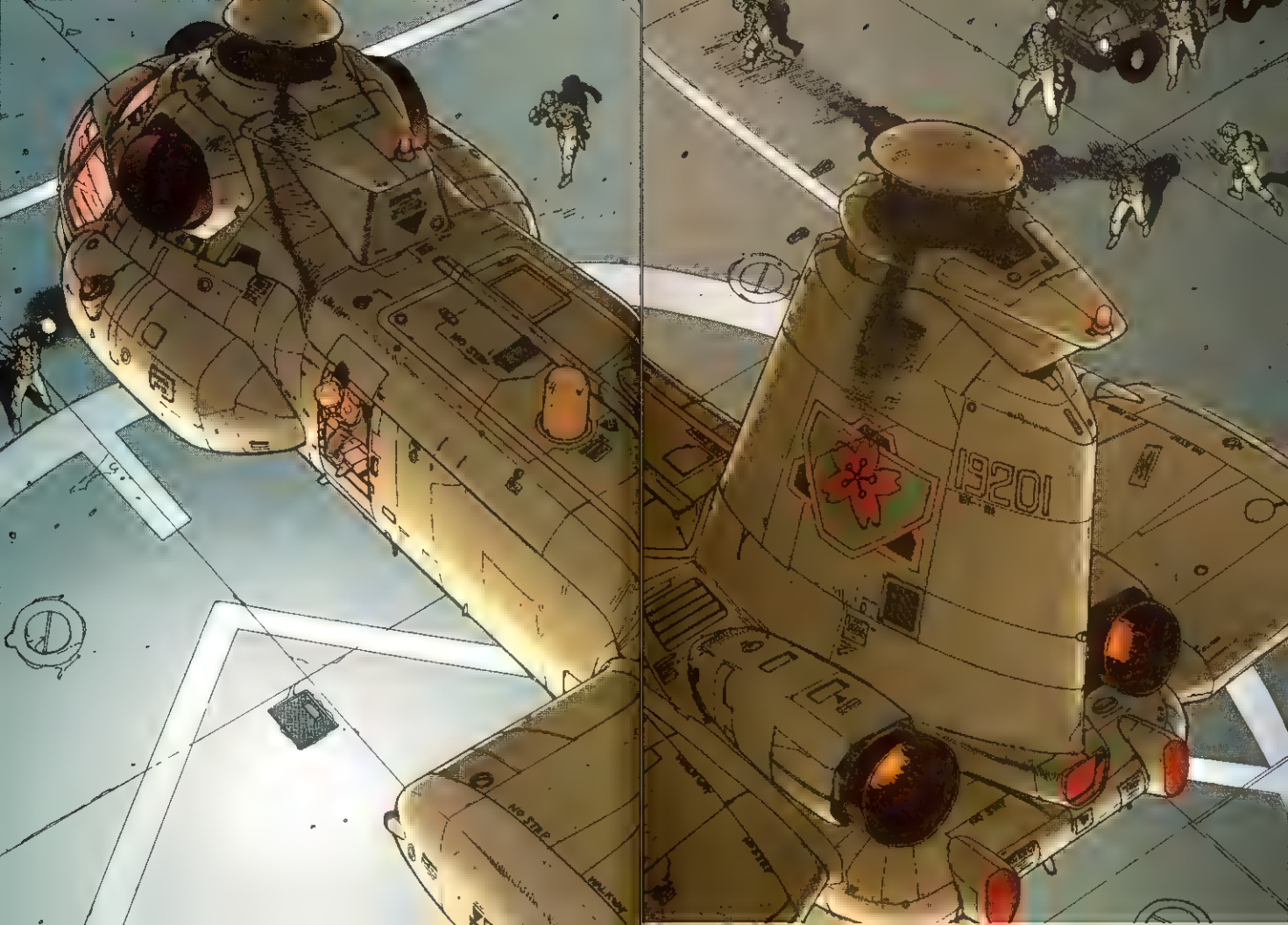
OOOH!!
HE IS SUCH A...
...JERK!!
SUNNES NOW... HEY! THIS LOOKS ABOUT RIGHT.
I'M OUT OF HERE. EXCEPT... WHY DO I KEEP THINKIN' ABOUT THAT DUMB GIRL?
HHRRRN
'CAUSE YOU'RE A JERK! COM'N!

WHAT TH--? I'M WAY OFF ...THIS 'S THE M DDLE OF THE OLYMPIC SITE
THOUGHT I D BE SOMEWHERE NEAR THE WEST GATE.
OH, WELL...
I BETTER KEEP T DOWN
THIS PLACE IS A REAL PAIN TO GET OUT OF, AND IT'S CRAWLING WITH GUARDS.
AAH...AAH...
CHOOO!
KLONG
WHAT WAS THAT?
SOUNDED LIKE 'T CAME FROM OVER HERE
!

BUDDABUDDABUD
TAK TAK TAK TAK
THE COLONEL HAS LANDED!
THE COLONE...!!!
STF-7

WILL HE BE ALL RIGHT? HE'S TAKING ALL OF THEM.
ALL ?! CAN HE DO THAT?!
FER SURE!
$3,500.00'S WORTH GONE... JUST LIKE THAT.
HAVING HIM AS OUR BOSS IS GONNA BE EXPENSIVE!
STOP COMPLAINING... THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE STILL ALIVE IS BECAUSE I LET YOU LIVE.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS!
I HAVE TO FIND THAT MORON BEFORE HE RUINS EVERY-THING!


19201

BUDDAB
BUDDABU
COLONEL!
....
I BEG YOUR PARDON, SIR...?

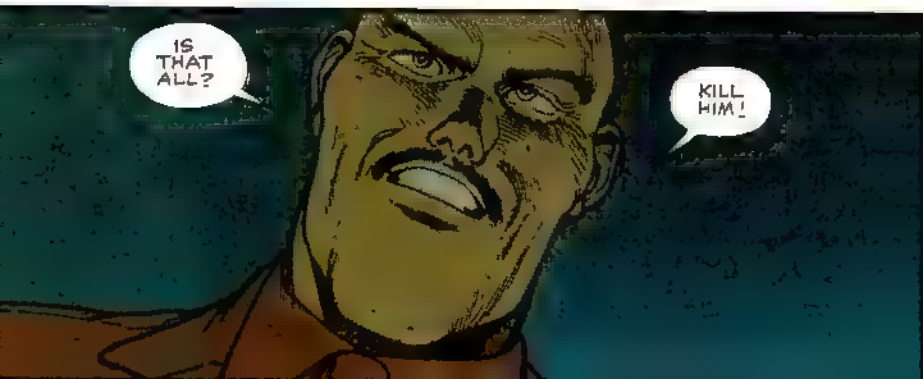
....
I CAN'T HEAR YOU OVER THE HELICOPTER, SIR...
WHAT?!
THE LIGHTS, YOU IDIOT!
TURN OUT THE LIGHTS!
YESSIR!
OR DO YOU WANT EVERYONE FOR MILES AROUND TO KNOW ABOUT OUR SECRET BASE?!

TAK TAK TAK TAK
ME AND MY SHADOW. WHEREVER I GO, THAT SKINHEAD SHOWS UP. BUT... I'M NO FOOL.
I AM OUT OF HERE!
I DON'T WANT TROUBLE.
KLONG

KLANK
ONGONGONG
SHIT!
!
YIPE!
OH NO!
OH, CRAP!!
OVER THERE!!
AN INTRUDER!
DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!
HALT! HALT!
GU-ULP!!

WHAT'S WRONG?

THERE'S AN INTRUDER ON THE GROUNDS, SIR.


IS THAT ALL?
KILL HIM!

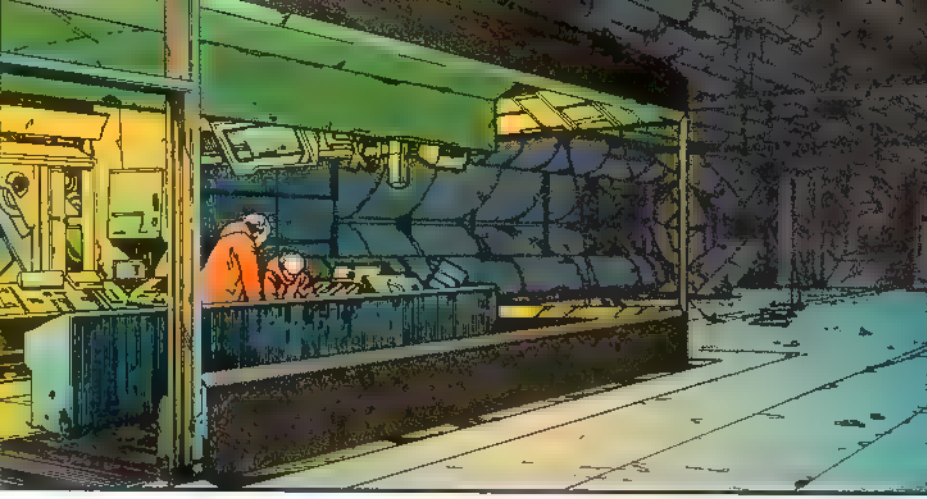
THERE HE IS!!
STOP OR WE'LL SHOOT!!
WOOOOOOOO
NO!!
THE CANAL!!
WE'VE GOT HIM TRAPPED!

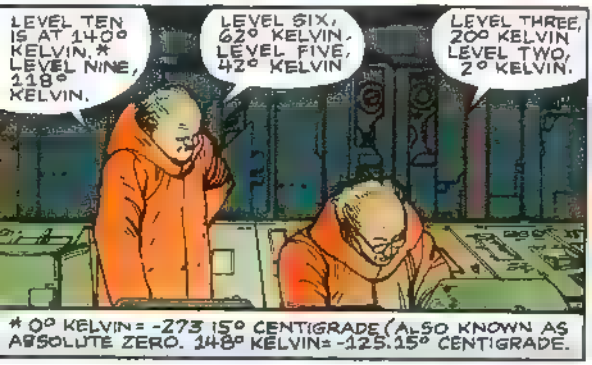
GERONIMO!
SPLUNK
DONG
HE FELL IN!
GET DOWN THERE!
SHIT!
glosh
glosh
KONG
OW!

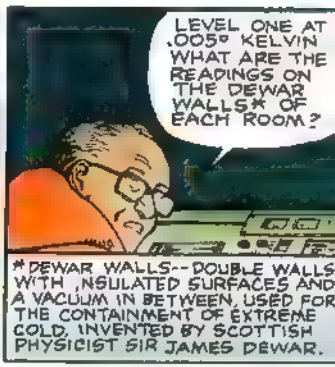
BOMBS AWAY!
BLOOSH
GET OFFA ME, STUPID!
PUFF
PUFF
plosh
KA
CHUK
DA DA DA DA DA
HE WENT DOWN THE PIPE!!
COVER THE EXIT! KEEP HIM IN THERE! DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!
I CAN'T SEE A THING!
BRING A LIGHT!
COULDN'T HIT THE BROAD SIDE OF A BARN!
K-ZING
K-ZING

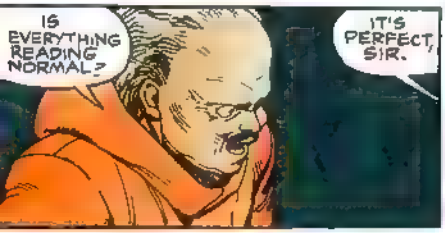
WE CAN PRO-CEED NOW, SIR.
GWONG

YOU'LL NEED TO WEAR ONE OF THESE, SIR.
COLONEL!
TH.S WAY, SIR.

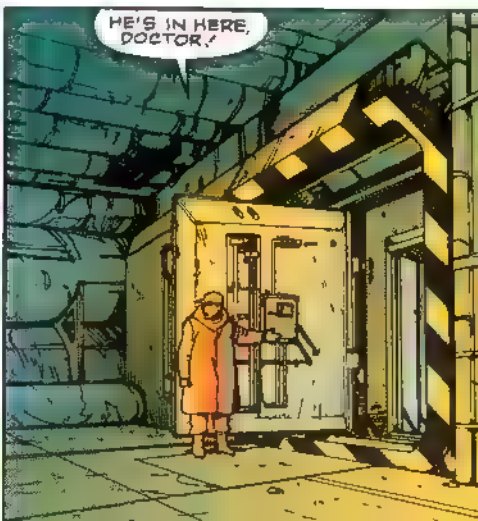



LEVEL TEN IS AT 140° KELVIN.* LEVEL NINE, 118° KELVIN.
LEVEL SIX, 62° KELVIN. LEVEL FIVE, 42° KELVIN
LEVEL THREE, 20° KELVIN LEVEL TWO, 2° KELVIN.
* 0° KELVIN = -273.15° CENTIGRADE (ALSO KNOWN AS ABSOLUTE ZERO. 148° KELVIN = -125.15° CENTIGRADE.


LEVEL ONE AT .005° KELVIN WHAT ARE THE READINGS ON THE DEWAR WALLS* OF EACH ROOM?
* DEWAR WALLS -- DOUBLE WALLS WITH INSULATED SURFACES AND A VACUUM IN BETWEEN, USED FOR THE CONTAINMENT OF EXTREME COLD. INVENTED BY SCOTTISH PHYSICIST SIR JAMES DEWAR.


IS EVERYTHING READING NORMAL?
IT'S PERFECT, SIR.

COLONEL?!
COLONEL, WHERE ARE YOU?!

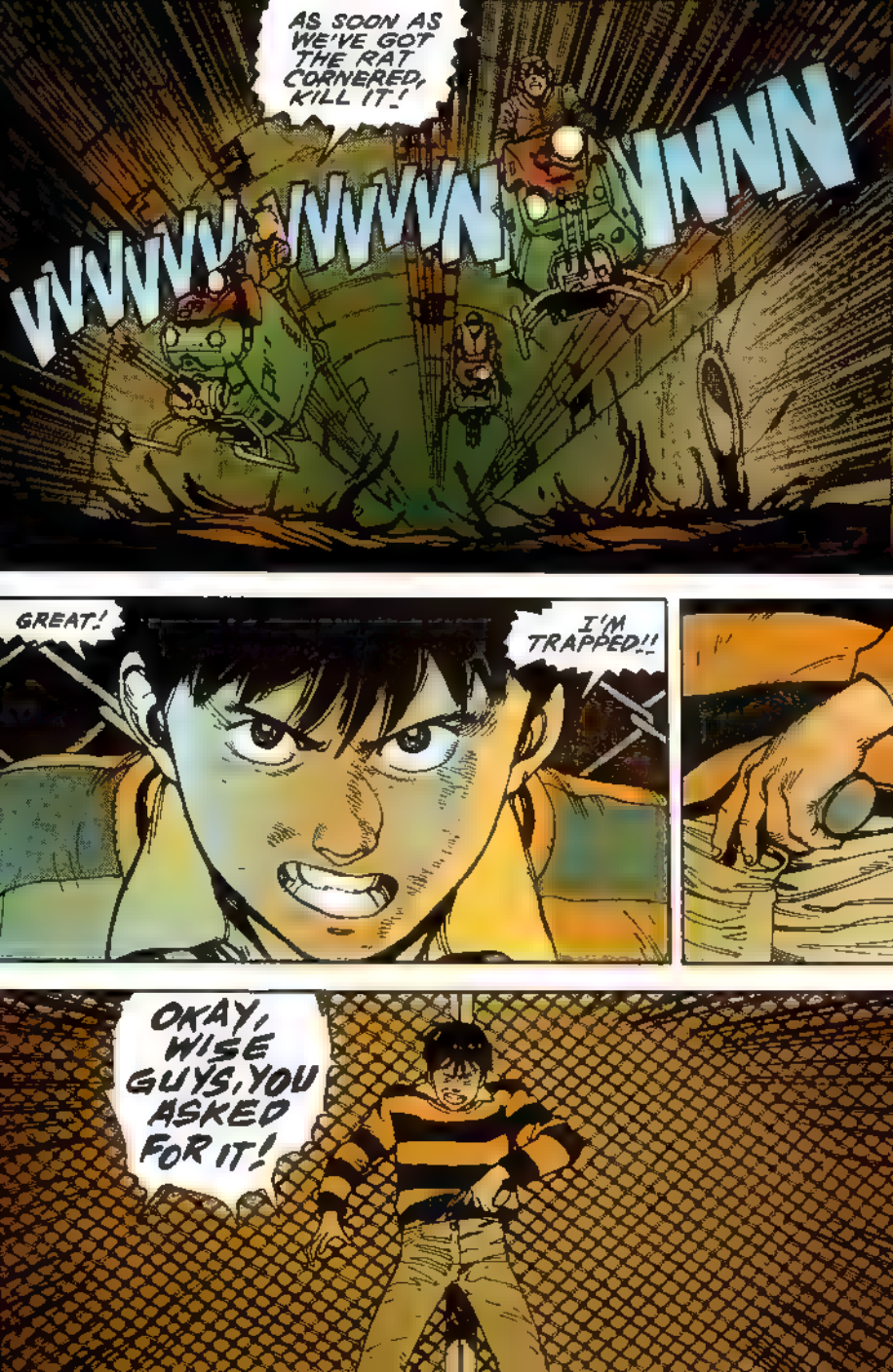

HE'S IN HERE, DOCTOR!

WHAT A DISGRACE! THEY WERE AFRAID... ASHAMED ...
THEY CHOSE TO CONCEAL IT... THEY BURIED THE ROOTS OF A GREAT CIVILIZATION ...
...TURNED THEIR BACKS ON WHAT SCIENCE HAD TO OFFER THEM...

CHUNK
TAK
FLUMP
IF HIS BIKE'S UNTOUCHED... KANEDA NEVER MADE IT HERE.

BLOOSH
BLOOSH
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
THOSE GUYS JUST DON'T QUIT.
THAT'S A DEADEND. HE MUST HAVE GONE THIS WAY!
gloosh
gloosh
gloosh
gloosh

SPLUNK
NOW WHERE DO I GO?
!
WHAT IS THAT?!
WVVVVNNNN
WHAT-?!
WVVVVNNNN

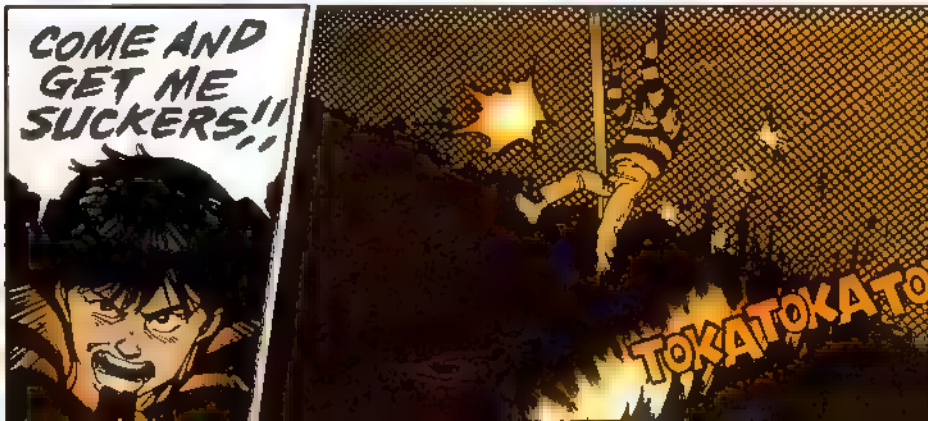

AS SOON AS WE'VE GOT THE RAT CORNERED, KILL IT!
VVVV

VVVVVNNN

!

FOOM

THERE HE IS!!


COME AND GET ME SUCKERS!!
TOKATOKATO

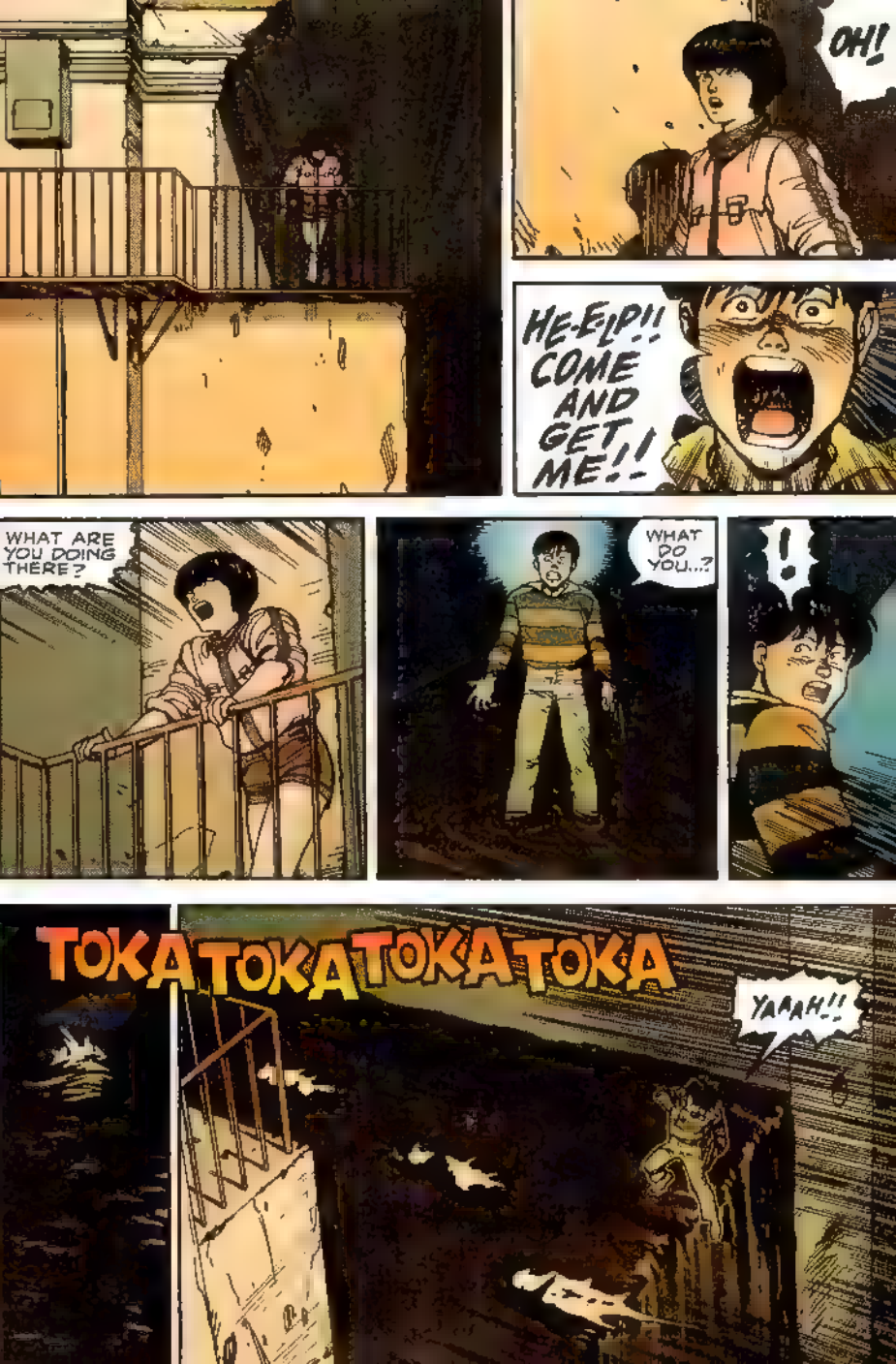
HUNH?
POK
AAUGH!!
BOOM
RRRRR
!
RRRRR

RAASH
FWOOH
BLAM
WHOA!
THANK YOU!
FWOOSH
AGGH!

BLOOM
BLAST!!
CHINK
HUNH?
TOKA
TOKA
TOKA
TOKA
HEYY--!

YOU AGAIN?!
THIS HAS REALLY BEEN ONE OF THOSE DAYS!
Plish
Plish
Yiiee!!
TOKATOKATOKATOKATOKATOKATOKATOKA
I GIVE UP! YOU WIN! JEEZUS!
HE-E-ELP!!
I CAN SEE THE LIGHT! I'M SAVED!!
WHO'M I KIDDING? NO ONE'S GONNA COME!
UH...?

17
PUFF
PUFF
LOOKS LIKE I'VE SCORED ANOTHER BIG GOOSE EGG...
PUFF
PUFF
GASP

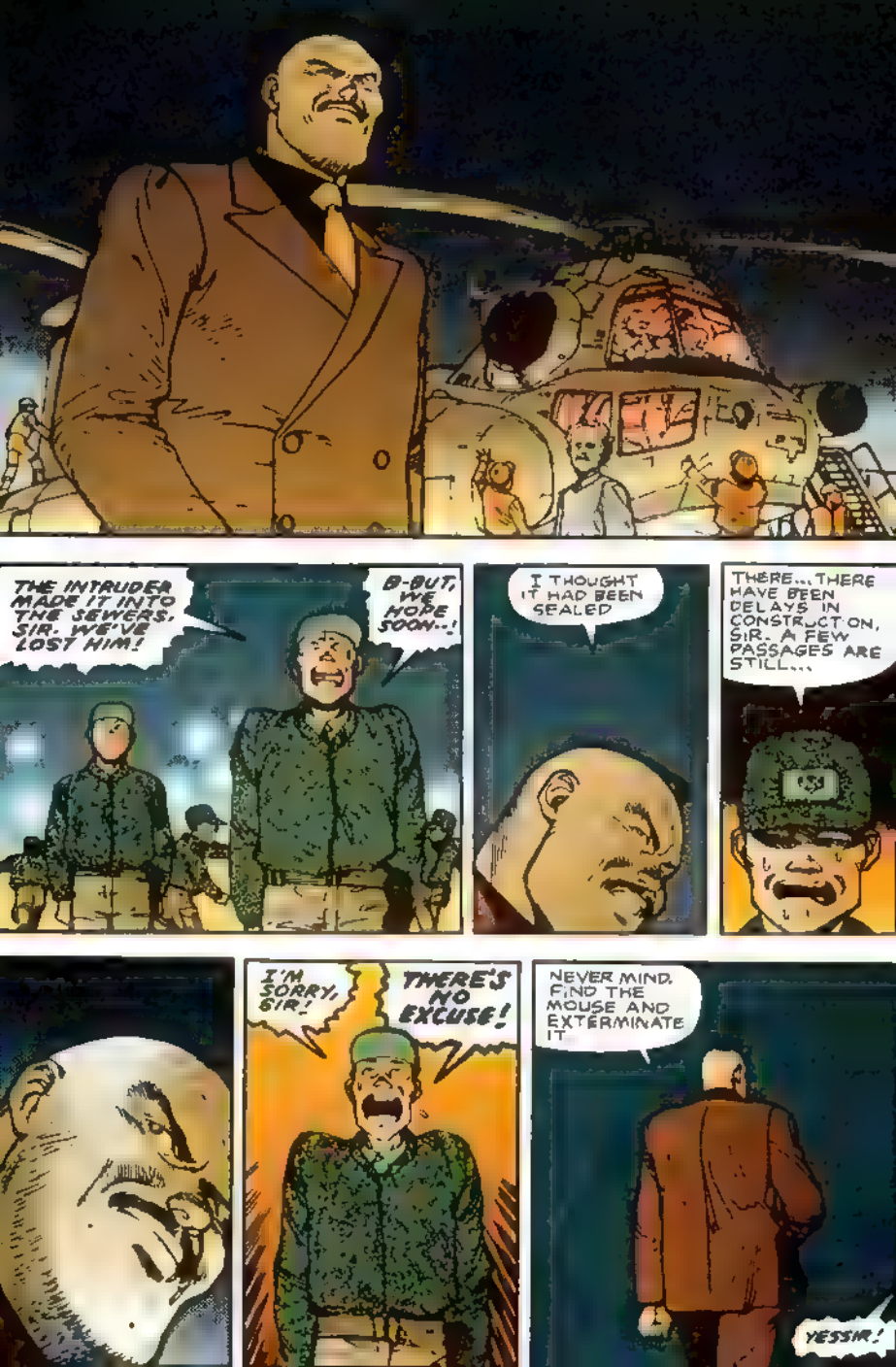

OH!
HE-E-LP!! COME AND GET ME!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
WHAT DO YOU...?
!
TOKATOKATOKATOKA
YAAAH!!

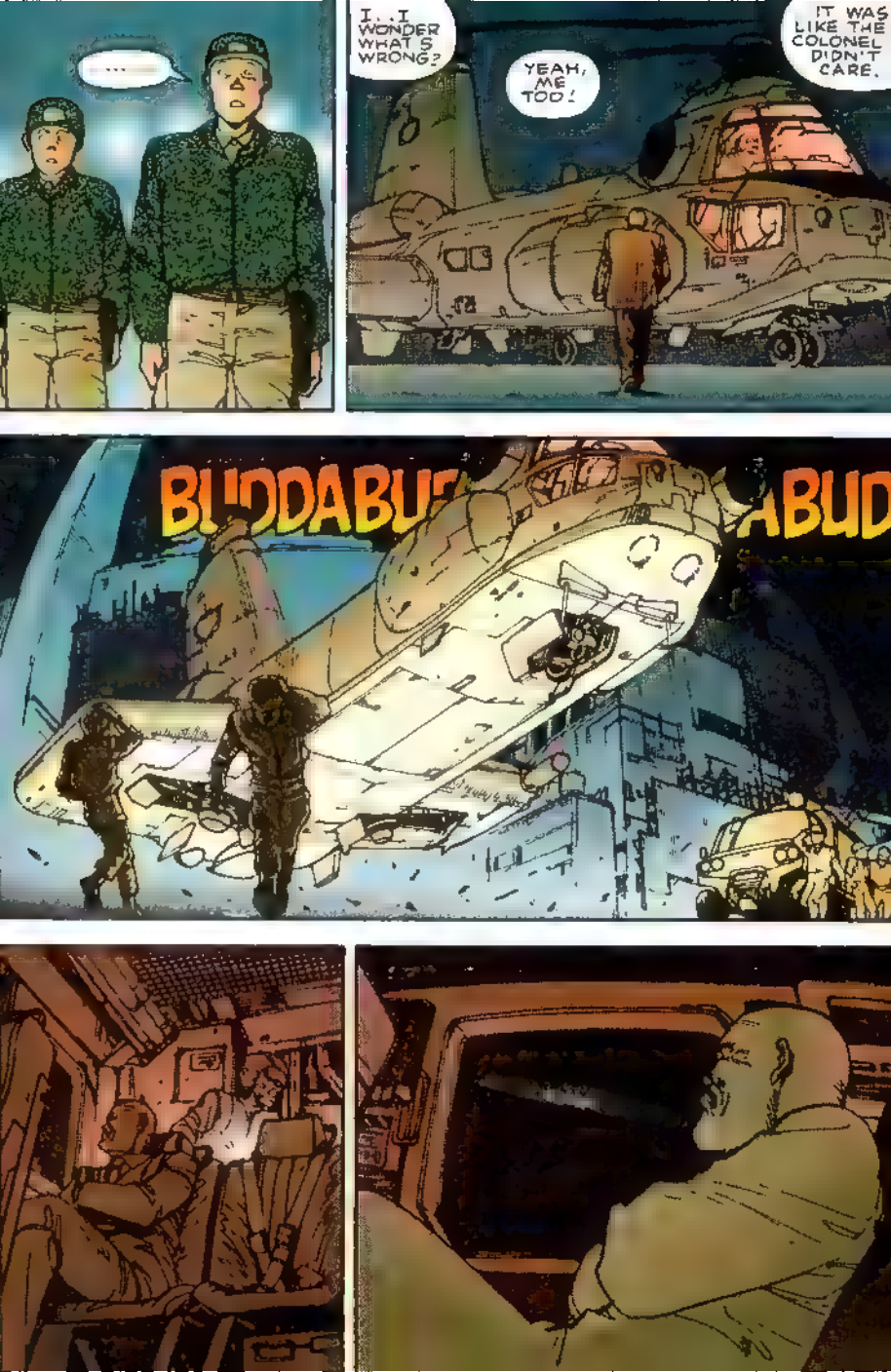
BLOOSH
VVVVNNN
CAREFUL!!
NNGH!
SKLITCH
VVVHOOM
VVVVNNN
!

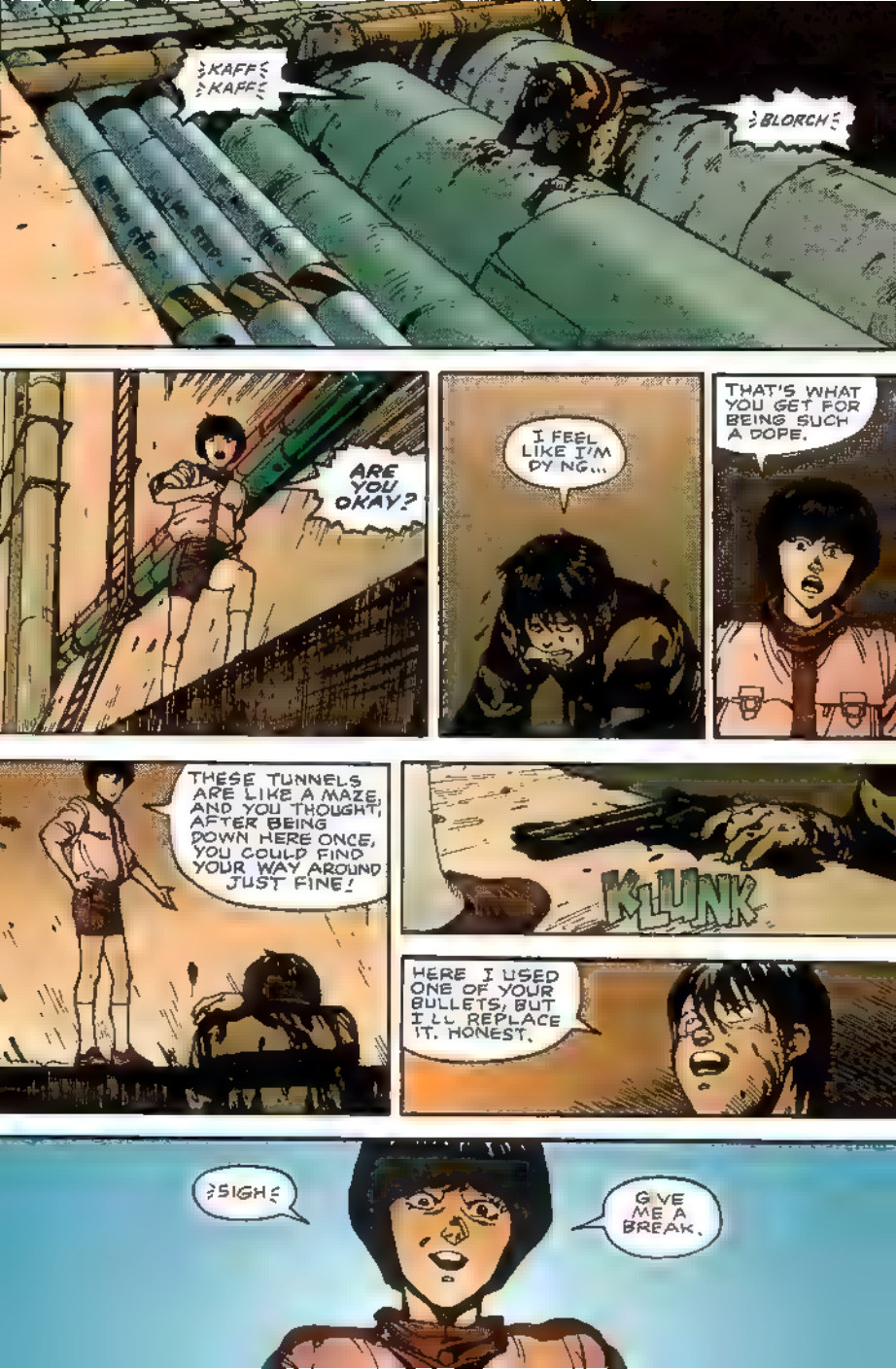
THE ARMY!
YOU MUST BE A FRIEND OF HIS!
SKETCH
:OHH:
GOOD! I CAN GET TWO OF YOU FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!
VLNN
SSSHHHH
YAAAAA!
YAAA!
:MMPH:
THLUK

HEY!
KLONK
?
SSSHHH
OOOW!!
WHAT IN THE--?!
:OHH:
GET OFF THERE, YOU LITTLE...
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
OH, NO!

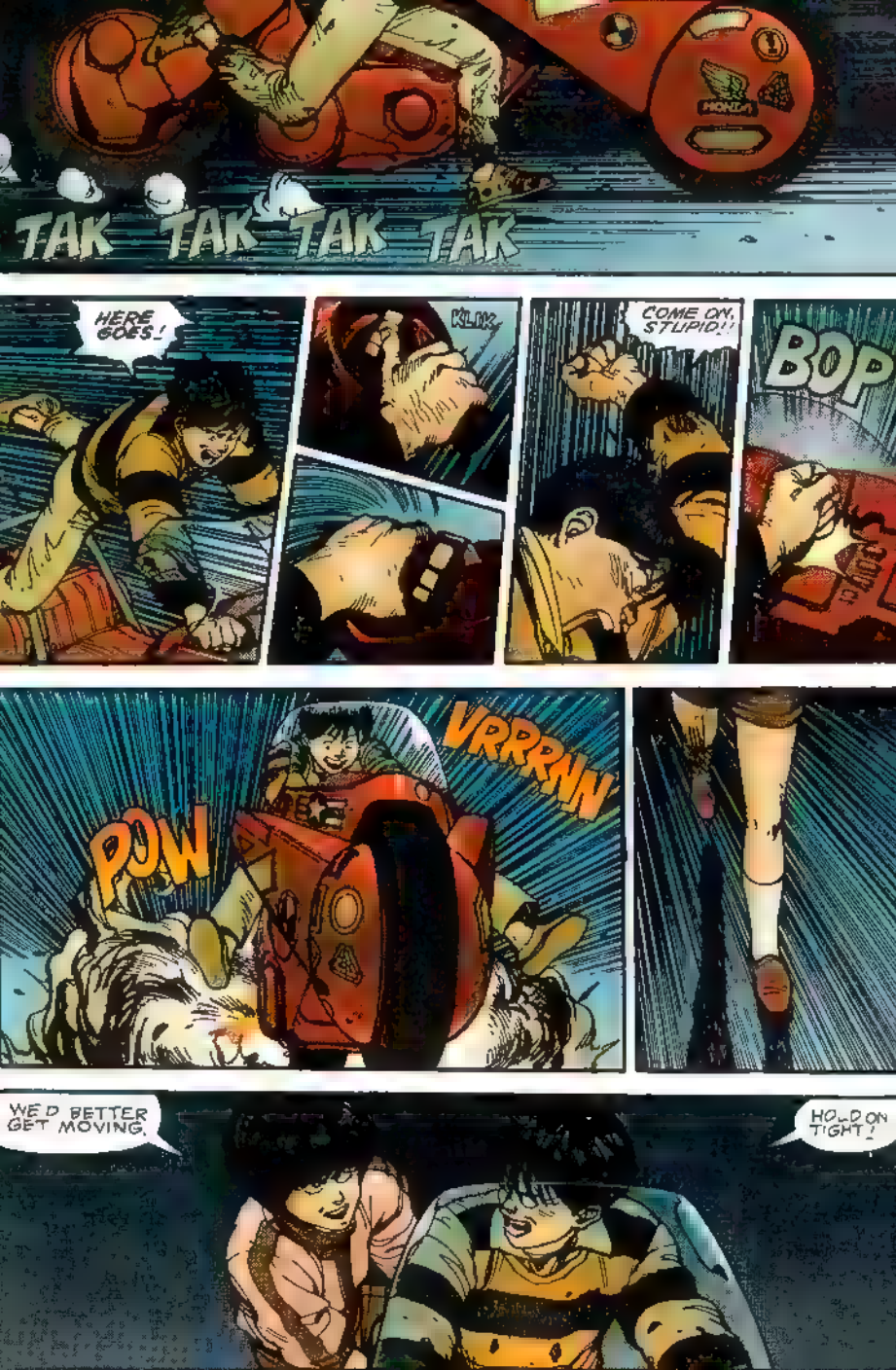
AAAAH!
AAAAH!
AAAAH!
VVVNN
SPLOOSH
KABOOM

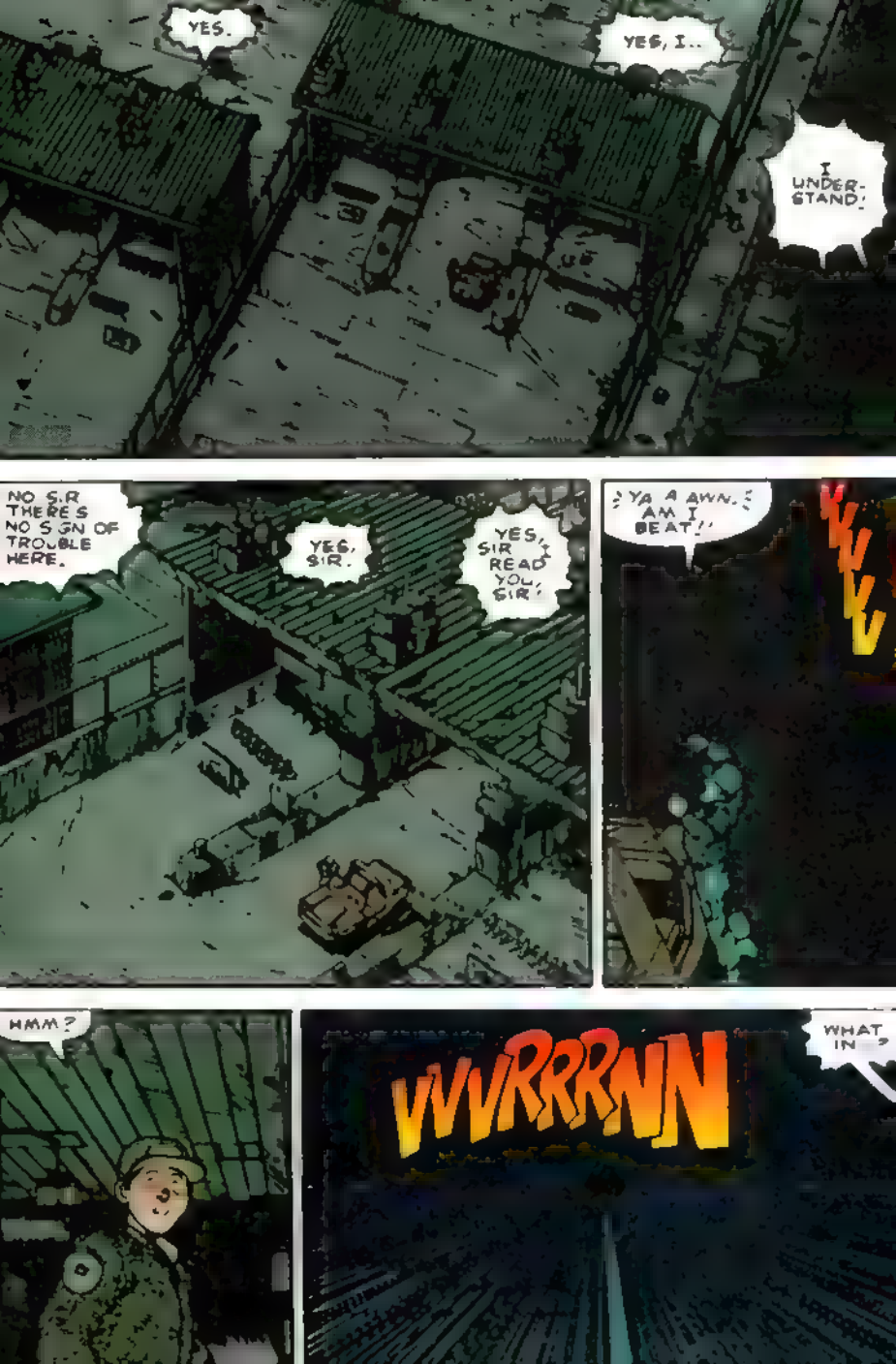

THE INTRUDER MADE IT INTO THE SEWERS, SIR. WE'VE LOST HIM!
B-BUT, WE HOPE SOON..!
I THOUGHT IT HAD BEEN SEALED
THERE... THERE HAVE BEEN DELAYS IN CONSTRUCTION, SIR. A FEW PASSAGES ARE STILL...
I'M SORRY, SIR!
THERE'S NO EXCUSE!
NEVER MIND. FIND THE MOUSE AND EXTERMINATE IT.
YESSIR!

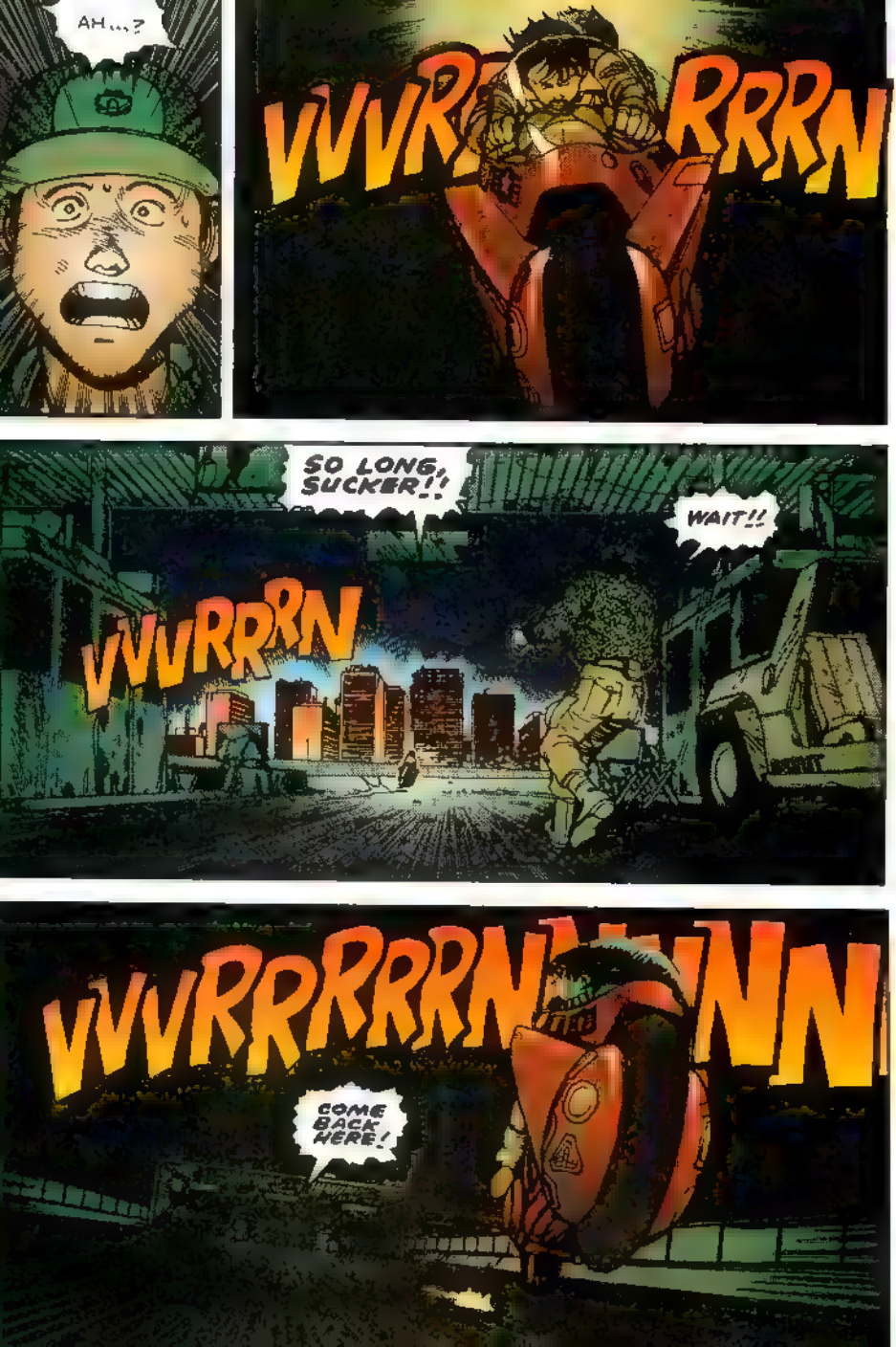

...
I..I WONDER WHAT'S WRONG?
YEAH, ME TOO!
IT WAS LIKE THE COLONEL DIDN'T CARE.
BUDDABUD
ABUD

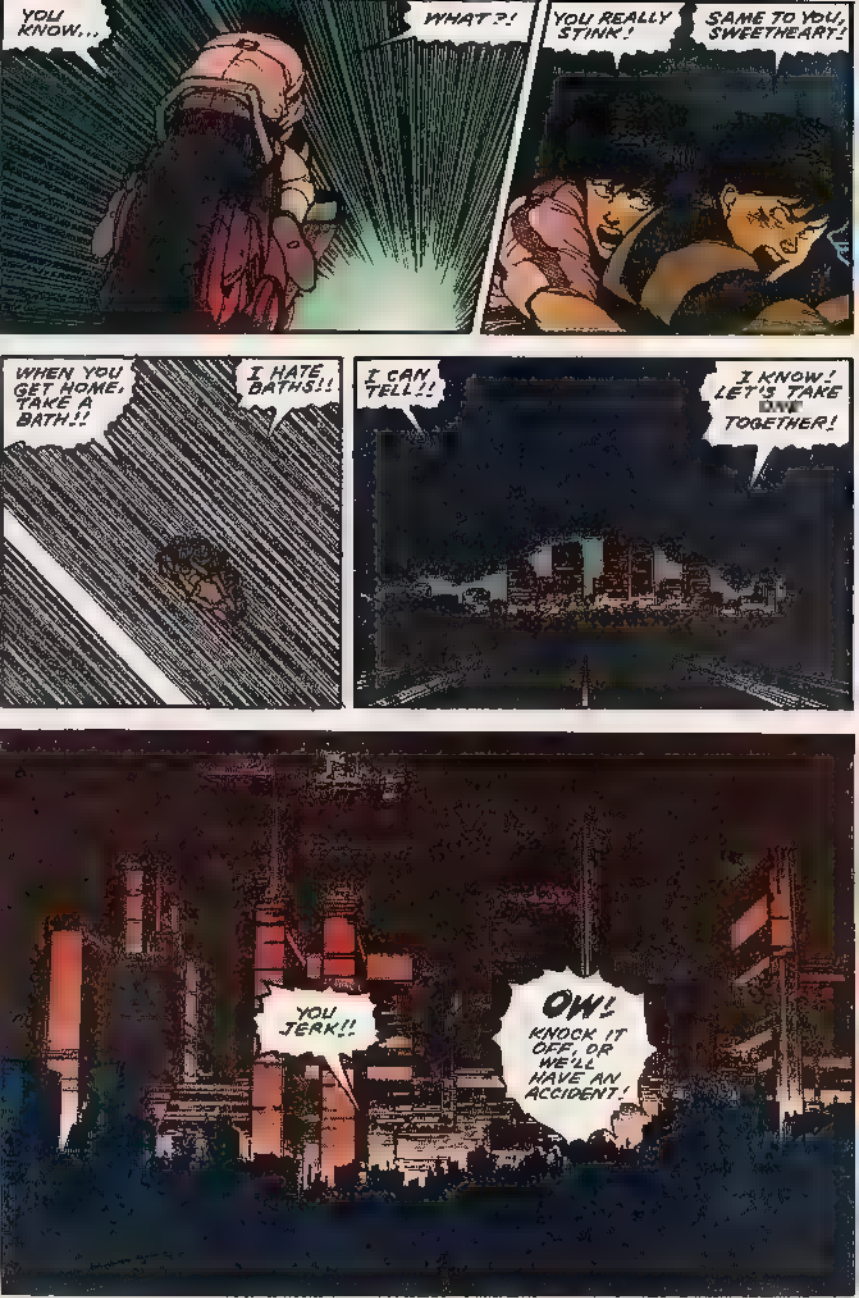

KAFF
KAFF
BLORCH
ARE YOU OKAY?
I FEEL LIKE I'M DY NG...
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR BEING SUCH A DOPE.
THESE TUNNELS ARE LIKE A MAZE, AND YOU THOUGHT, AFTER BEING DOWN HERE ONCE, YOU COULD FIND YOUR WAY AROUND JUST FINE!
KLUNK
HERE I USED ONE OF YOUR BULLETS, BUT I LL REPLACE IT. HONEST.
SIGH
GIVE ME A BREAK.

SEEMS TO BE SAFE. THEY PROBABLY THINK WE'RE STILL IN THERE.
HOW'S THE BIKE?
HOLDING TOGETHER THE BATTERY'S ALMOST SHOT, BUT THAT SHOULDN'T MATTER
BUT WILL IT TAKE TWO PEOPLE?
WE'LL BE FINE
I THINK
KRAKKLANK
UNLESS YOU WEIGH OVER 210 POUNDS, I THINK WE CAN RISK IT


TAK TAK TAK TAK
HONDA
HERE GOES!
KLINK
COME ON, STUPID!!
BOP
POW
VRRRNN
WE'D BETTER GET MOVING.
HOLD ON TIGHT!


YES.
YES, I..
I UNDER-STAND.
NO SIR THERE'S NO SIGN OF TROUBLE HERE.
YES, SIR.
YES, SIR I READ YOU, SIR.
YA A AWN. AM I BEAT!
HMM?
VVVRRRNN
WHAT IN


AH...?
VVVR RRRN
SO LONG, SUCKER!!
WAIT!!
VVVRRRN
VVVRRRRRN NN
COME BACK HERE!



NEXT ISSUE: **CYCLE WARS**

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

The creator of **Akira** was born in April of 1954 in Japan's Miyagi Prefecture, some 400 kilometers northeast of Tokyo. He grew up there and attended Sanuma High School, whose graduates also include one of Japan's most famous comics creators, **Shotaro Ishinomori**, whose work includes **Cyborg 009** and the current best seller **Japan Inc.**

In 1973, after graduation, Otomo moved to Tokyo. His goal was to become a comics artist and in August of that year he achieved it with his first published work, **Mateo Falcone** an adaptation of the short novel by **Prosper Mérimée.**

Over the next few years, Otomo's reputation grew based upon a large number of short stories (twenty to thirty pages) which appeared most regularly in **Action** magazine. Later these works would be collected in book format, beginning with **Short Piece** in 1979 and followed by **Highway Star** (October 1979), **Good Weather** (March 1981), and **Boogie Woogie Waltz** (May 1982).

After success with the short story form, Otomo turned to the longer saga-style more commonly associated with Japanese comics. **Fireball**, a human versus mega-computer story, appeared in a limited circulation magazine in 1979. Though still uncompleted, it marked the beginning of Otomo's interest in the science-fiction action genre and is a natural forerunner to his most acclaimed works, **Domu** and **Akira**.

Domu, a 230 page graphic novel centering on a conflict between two individuals possessing deadly psychic powers, began serialization in 1980 and continued for two years. Published in book form in 1983, it was an instant best seller and created something of a controversy when it was awarded Japan's science-fiction Grand Prix of 1983 for best s-f novel, the first time the prize ever went to a comics work.

This led Otomo to undertake an even more ambitious project, **Akira** which would be some 1800 pages long. Otomo launched **Akira** in **Young Magazine** published by **Kodansha Ltd.** This tradition-breaking but struggling bi-weekly was aimed at a high school college student audience whom Otomo felt was most in tune with the new directions he hoped to achieve. The rising circulation of **Young Magazine** with the appearance of **Akira** proved him correct. Today, there are over a million readers.

In book format **Akira** was just as much a phenomenon. The first volume was a best seller the moment it appeared in stores. The subsequent three volumes have been received with equal enthusiasm. With the fifth and final volume (planned for Spring of 1989), the saga will have a total of three million copies in print.

The latest success for Otomo and **Akira** was the feature length animated film. Opening in July, this new interpretation of the comics story for which Otomo acted as director, scenarist, designer and illustrator set attendance records for an animated movie in Japan.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

YASUMITSU SUITAKI

MAMORU SHIOSAKI
SATOSHI TAKEBAYASHI

SHINSUKE ISHIKAWA

AKIRA SATO

YOKO ONIZAWA
MIO UMEDA AS YOKO

MOICHI YUBI

NORIYUKI GOTANDA
YUMA AMAO

JO ODAKA

STEVE OLIE

MICHAEL HODGES

MIKE ADKENATZ
HARRY CANDELARIO
MICHAEL HEDLEY

MARK GIAMBRUNO

ARCHIE GOODWIN

A new force moves through the post World War III city of Neo-Tokyo. A force dubbed Number 41 by the secret government agency monitoring his moves. Once he was a teenage motorcycle gang member named Tetsuo, but that was before a strange accident put him in the hands of the government and left him changed. A power is growing in Tetsuo. It allows him to kill with a glance. Violently. Explosively. But the power also corrupts. It turns him against his best friend, Kaneda. It drives him to seek out the murderous Clown cycle gang, bitter rivals of his former friends. Yet for all his emerging power, Tetsuo is still only a shadow of something greater to come, a sleeping giant not yet awakened. AKIRA.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA

This scan produced by:

I love um

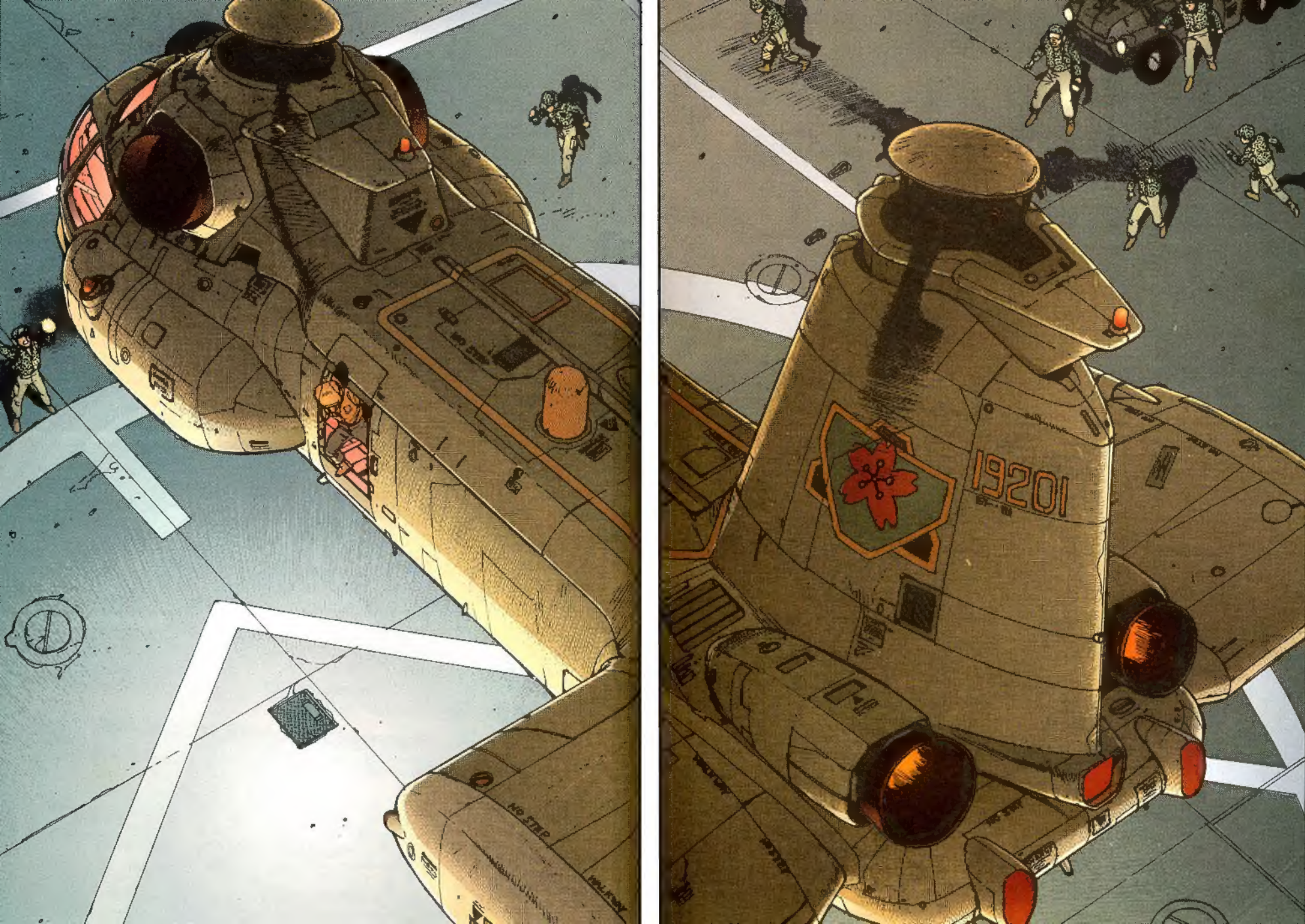
I buy um

I preserve um

AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

BOOK TWO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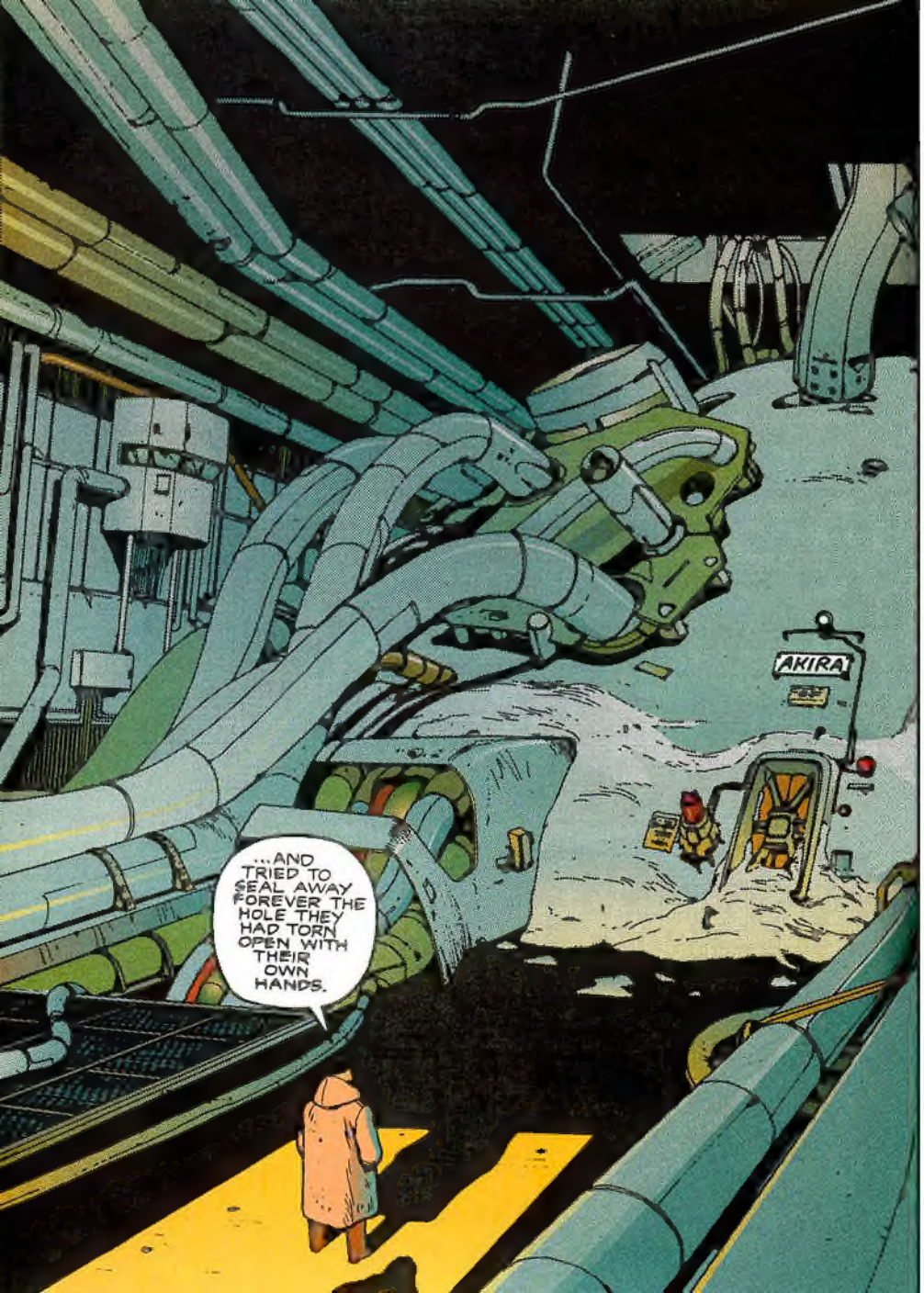
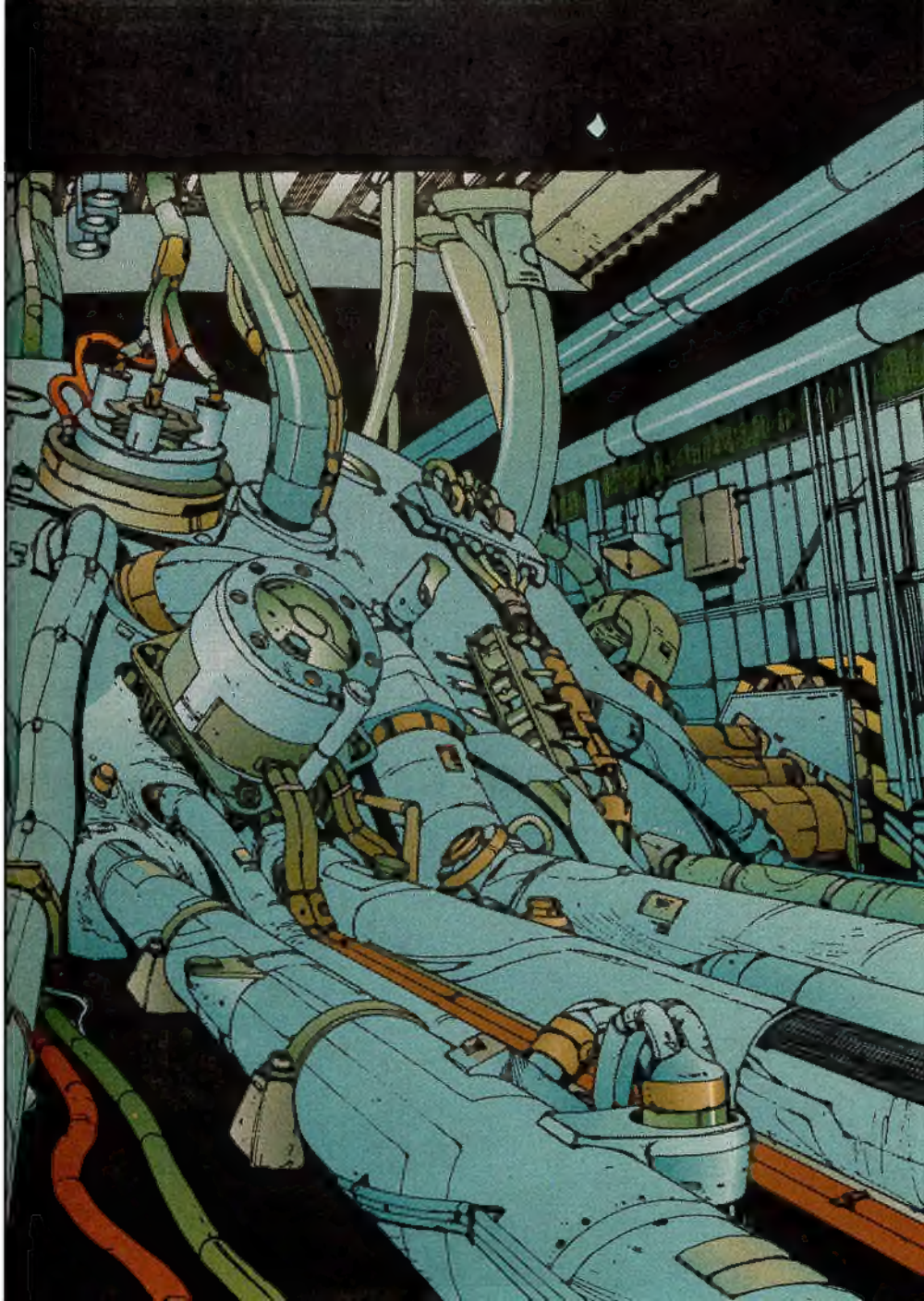
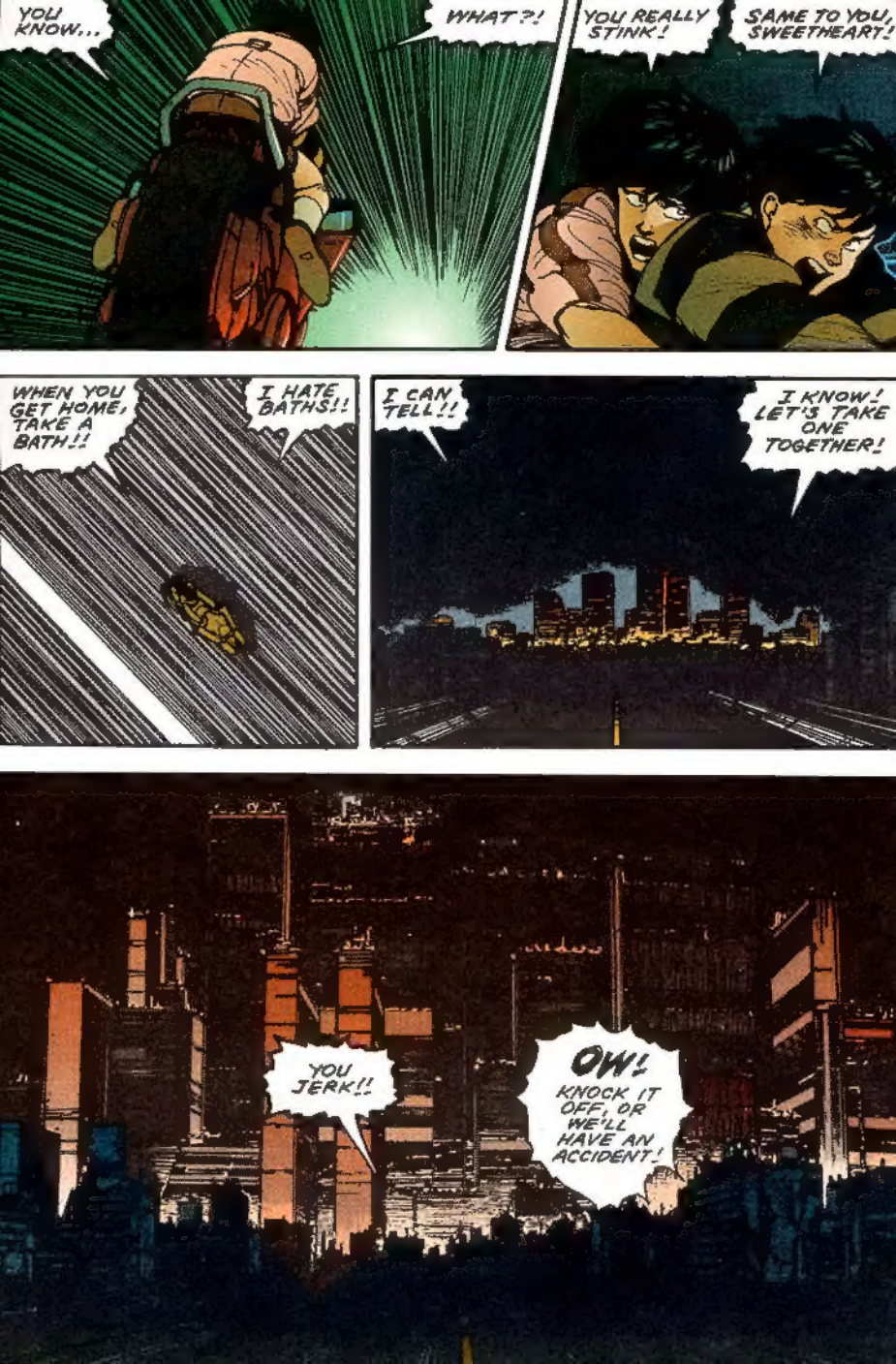

AKIRA
...AND TRIED TO SEAL AWAY FOREVER THE HOLE THEY HAD TORN OPEN WITH THEIR OWN HANDS.



YOU KNOW...
WHAT?!
YOU REALLY STINK!
SAME TO YOU, SWEETHEART!
WHEN YOU GET HOME, TAKE A BATH!!
I HATE BATHS!!
I CAN TELL!!
I KNOW! LET'S TAKE ONE TOGETHER!
YOU JERK!!
OW! KNOCK IT OFF, OR WE'LL HAVE AN ACCIDENT!